



## THE HOLY GEETA

### SRIMAD BHAGWAD GEETA

Translated by *PRABHA DUNEJA*

First Edition: Delhi, July, 1998

## INTRODUCTION

Bhagwad Geeta is the most luminous dialogue in the legacy of Vedic literature. The holy poem has been upheld as one of the *Prasthanatraya* - the three authoritative texts of the *Sanatan* [eternal] Vedic Religion. The first one is the *Vedic Prasthan* called the *Upanishadas*, the second is the philosophical *Prasthan* - the *Brahma Sutra*; the third *Prasthan* is the Bhagwad Geeta. Bhagwad Geeta is a unique scripture which summarizes almost all the essential teachings of the *Vedic* literature. It has been a perennial source of spiritual inspiration for the entire mankind.

Bhagwad Geeta is one of the most well known and revered text among the other scriptures of the World. It is a compendium of spiritual wisdom and the most appropriate guide for living a harmonious life in all respects.

The message of the holy Geeta is indeed phenomenal and timeless. It is an anthology of spiritual wisdom which guides the individual into the mysteries of self-realization and God-realization.

It analyzes almost all levels of human psychology and trains the person into living a productive, joyful, balanced and creative life. The teachings of Geeta are very intimately connected with the every day life of a man [or woman]. In the words of Swami Sivananda, "Study of the Geeta alone is sufficient for the purpose of daily *swadhyaya* (scriptural study). You will find a solution here for all your doubts. The more you study with devotion and faith, the more you will get deeper knowledge, penetrative insight and clear right thinking. Even if you live in the spirit of one verse of the Geeta, all your miseries will come to an end and you will attain the goal of life - Immortality and Eternal Peace."

The message of Geeta presents a profound insight into the workings of human nature and provides the most appropriate guidance which is needed in almost every field of life in order to live in perfect harmony with our own self and with others. The dialogue provides an understanding into the mystery of the Supreme-soul and how every individual can restore himself to the Supremacy of his essential nature.

In the words of Dr. Paul Brunton, "The Geeta summarizes various approaches to the Overself and also describes the latter. Sri Krsna not only represents the embodied spiritual teacher, but He is ultimately the Overself within man [and woman], the God within who can illuminate all dark corners and answer all questions. At the end of the dialogue after hearing all the teachings, the pupil's mind becomes peaceful. He says indeed: "My doubts are dispelled. Destroyed are my illusions." By what magic was this mental change accomplished? Through both the guidance and grace received from his teacher and his own inner growth in striving for insight. The difficulties one meets in modern life can be met and overcome after we gain such insight. Wisdom means the ability to negotiate all the circumstances of life adequately, correctly and with spiritual success. The deep spiritual comfort emanating from the teachings of the Geeta is peculiarly needed at this stage of the world's affairs."

The message of Geeta synthesizes almost all the well known teachings of the ancient scriptures of the world and it is addressed to the entire mankind. In words of Dr. Annie Besant, "Among the priceless teaching that may be found in the great Hindu poem of the Mahabharata, there is none

so rare and precious as this "The Lord's song." Since it fell from the divine lips of Sri Krsna on the field of battle, and stilled the surging emotions of the disciple and friend, it has quietened and strengthened many troubled hearts, and many weary souls have been led to Him! It is meant to lift the aspirant from the lower levels of renunciation, where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights where desires are dead, and where the Yogi dwells in calm and ceaseless contemplation, while his body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall to his lot in life. That the spiritual man [or woman] needs not be a recluse, that union with divine life may be achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs, that the obstacles to that union lie, not outside us, but within us, such is the central lesson of the Bhagwad Geeta."

Ever since the teachings of Geeta have become known to the people in Europe and America; it has quickly won the interest and admiration of millions. Many philosophical and religious groups in foreign countries hold the same respect for Geeta as the people in India. About the popularity of Geeta, Mahatma Gandhi has written that during one of his visits to England he went to a big library and inquired from the librarian about the most popular religious book, which was in greatest demand. The librarian informed him that it was indeed the Bhagwad Geeta.

The great educationist and philosopher of India Mr. Madan Mohan Malaviya has written about Geeta in these words. "I believe that in all the living languages of the world, there is no book so full of true knowledge, and yet so handy as the Bhagwad Geeta." The well known professor of religion at Oxford University Mr. Zaehner has written about the glory of the sacred song in these words, "Geeta is a first hand guide to the ancient roots of Vedic religion. Although in *Shevatsvara Upanisad* the transcendence of the personal God has been affirmed to some extent - but with Geeta has come the devotional religion."

The great respect and appreciation for Geeta has been voiced by Warren Hastings the first British Governor General of India in year 1773. He has said, "the Geeta would live long after the British Empire in India has ceased to exist." The Song Celestial by Sir Edwin Arnold describes the greatness of Geeta in these words. "In plain but noble language it unfolds a

philosophical system which remains to this day the prevailing *Brahmanic* belief, blending as it does the doctrines of *Kapila*, *Patanjali*, and the Vedas. So sublime its aspirations, and so pure and tender its piety." Sir Edwin Arnold has called Geeta the incomparable religious classic of India.

Similarly Mr. Von Humboldt, Max Muller, Emerson, Franklin Edgerton and Aldous Huxley and many other scholars and educationists of the world have taken Geeta as a text for the exposition of their thoughts. In the words of Aldous Huxley, "Bhagwad Geeta is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of the perennial philosophy."

The message of the holy dialogue has been held in deep reverence by the sages, philosophers and the learned scholars all over the world. The teachings of Geeta are universal and meant for the welfare of the entire creation. There are hundreds of commentaries on Bhagwad Geeta both in India and in many foreign languages. This is perhaps the most widely translated scriptural text of the world. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "for centuries people have found comfort in this great book which sets forth in precise and penetrating words the essential principles of a spiritual religion which are not contingent on ill-founded facts, unscientific dogmas or arbitrary fancies. With a long history of spiritual power, it serves even today as a light to all who will receive illumination from the profundity of its wisdom which insists on a world wider and deeper than wars and revolutions can touch. It is a powerful shaping factor in the renewal of spiritual life and has secured an assured place among the world's greatest scriptures."

The present translation is only a humble addition to the work which has been accomplished by the Geeta scholars. This translation with Romanized Sanskrit verses has been brought forward in order to encourage the modern generation into the study of this ancient scripture. It makes me feel so blessed that the melodious recitation and chanting of Geeta verses, which I have enjoyed sharing with others, is finally going to be presented in Romanized simple form to the admirers of Geeta. This work is meant to help the Indians living in foreign countries and to arouse the interest of foreigners into the recitation of Sanskrit verses and to understand the meaning of Geeta in a simple flexible and comprehensible language. This

book is indeed a prasada [mercy of Krsna] to the readers which will initiate them into the appreciation of the holy dialogue. The entire purpose of composing this pocket book with Romanized Sanskrit verses is to spread the message of Geeta and to pass on the legacy of the Holy sermon to the coming generation.

**Sri Krsna Arpanamastu**  
***Prabha Duneja***

**THE UPANISHADS**  
**BREATH OF THE ETERNAL**

Published 1948

BY THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**INTRODUCTION**

THE OLDEST SCRIPTURES OF INDIA, and the most important, are the Vedas. All orthodox Hindus recognize in them the origin of their faith and its highest written authority.

The Vedas are four in number: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. Each of these is divided into two parts: Work and Knowledge. The first is mainly made up of hymns, instructions regarding rites and ceremonies, and rules of conduct. The second is concerned with knowledge of God, the highest aspect of religious truth and is called - Upanishads.

The literal meaning of upanishad, "sitting near devotedly," brings picturesquely to mind an earnest disciple learning from his teacher. The word also means "secret teaching" - secret, no doubt, because a teaching vouchsafed only to those who are spiritually ready to receive and profit by it. Still another interpretation is sponsored by the great seventh-century commentator Shankara: knowledge of God - "the knowledge of Brahman, the knowledge that destroys the bonds of ignorance and leads to the supreme goal of freedom."

How many Upanishads once existed is unknown. One hundred and eight have been preserved, these ranging in length from a few hundred to many thousands of words, some in prose, some in verse, some part one, part the other. In style and manner they vary widely, often within the same Upanishad, being now simply and concretely narrative, now subtly and abstractly expository, often assuming, in either case, a dialogue form. Their tone too fluctuates, the characteristic seriousness and elevation finding occasional relief in homely humor.

A characteristic of the Upanishads is their homogeneity. Many apparently differing conceptions are to be found in them, but these are, roughly speaking, to be found in all of them, not distributed, one in one Upanishad, another in another. It is true that one Upanishad may emphasize certain ideas, or a certain view, more than the rest, or may specialize as it were in a particular topic.

For the study of the Vedas, according to long tradition, and even according to the Vedas themselves, one must have a master, or Guru: "Approach a teacher," we read in the Rig, "with humility and with a desire to serve"; and in the Upanishads: "To many it is not given to hear of the Self. Many, though they hear of it, do not understand it. Wonderful is he who speaks of it. Intelligent is he who learns of it. Blessed is he who, taught by a good teacher, is able to understand it."

The function of the good teacher is twofold. He of course explains the scriptures, the spirit as well as the letter; but, what is more important still, he teaches by his life - by his daily acts, by his most casual words, sometimes even by his silence. Only to be near him, only to serve or obey him in humility and in reverence, is to become quickened in spirit; and the purpose of study of the scriptures is not merely or primarily to inform the intellect, but to purify and enrich the soul:

Pleasant indeed are the study and the teaching of the Vedas!  
One who engages in these things attains to concentration  
And is no longer a slave to one's passions;  
Devout, self-controlled, disciplined in spirit,  
One rises to fame and is a blessing to mankind.

We have said that the orthodox Hindu regards the Vedas as his highest written authority. Any subsequent scripture, if he is to regard it as valid, must be in agreement with them: it may expand upon them, it may develop them, and still be recognized, but it must not contradict them. They are to him, as nearly as any human document can be, the expression of divine truth. At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that his allegiance to their authority is slavish or blind. If he considers them the word of God, it is because he believes their truth to be verifiable, immediately, at any moment, in his own experience. If he found on due examination that it was not so verifiable, he would reject it. If he found that any part of it was not so verifiable, he would reject that. And in this position the scriptures, he will tell you, uphold him. The real study, say the Upanishads, is not study of themselves but study of that "by which we realize the changeless." In other words, the real study in religion is first-hand experience of God.

Indeed the term Vedas, as used by the orthodox, not only names a large body of texts handed down by generation after generation, but in another sense stands for nothing less than the inexpressible truth of which all scriptures are of necessity a pale reflection. Regarded in this second aspect, the Vedas are infinite and eternal. They are that perfect knowledge which is God.

## **TEACHINGS OF QUEEN KUNTI**

By HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The tragic and heroic figure of Queen Kunti emerges from an explosive era in the history of ancient India. As related in the *Mahabharata*, India's grand epic poem of 110,000 couplets, Kunti was the wife of King Pandu and the mother of five illustrious sons known as the Pandavas. As such, she was one of the central figures in a complex political drama that culminated fifty centuries ago in the Kuruksetra War, a devastating war of ascendancy that

changed the course of world events. The *Mahabharata* describes the prelude to the holocaust as follows:

Pandu became king because his elder brother Dhrtarastra had been born blind, a condition that excluded him from direct succession. Some time after Pandu ascended to the throne, Dhrtarastra married Gandhari and fathered one hundred sons. This was the ruling family of the Kaurava dynasty, of whom the eldest was the ambitious and cruel Duryodhana.

Meanwhile, Pandu had taken two wives, Madri and Kunti. Originally named Prtha, Kunti was the daughter of Surasena, the chief of the glorious Yadu dynasty. The *Mahabharata* relates that Kunti "was gifted with beauty and character; she rejoiced in the law [dharma] and was great in her vows." She also possessed an unusual benediction. When she was a child, her father Surasena had given her in adoption to his childless cousin and close friend Kuntibhoja (hence the name "Kunti"). In her stepfather's house, Kunti's duty was to look after the welfare of guests. One day the powerful sage and mystic Durvasa came there and was pleased by Kunti's selfless service. Foreseeing that she would have difficulty conceiving sons, Durvasa gave her the benediction that she could invoke any demigod and by him obtain progeny.

After Kunti married Pandu, he was placed under a curse that prevented him from begetting children. So he renounced the throne and retired with his wives to the forest. There Kunti's special benediction enabled her to conceive (at her husband's request) three glorious sons. First she invoked Dharma, the demigod of religion. After worshiping him and repeating an invocation Durvasa had taught her, she united with Dharma and, in time, gave birth to a boy. As soon as the child was born, a voice with no visible source said, "This child will be called Yudhisthira, and he will be very virtuous. He will be splendid, determined, renounced, and famous throughout the three worlds."

Having been blessed with this virtuous son, Pandu then asked Kunti for a son of great physical strength. Thus Kunti invoked Vayu, the demigod of the wind, who begot the mighty Bhima. Upon Bhima's birth the supernatural voice said, "This child will be the foremost of all strong men."



Thereafter Pandu consulted with great sages in the forest and then asked Kunti to observe vows of austerity for one full year. At the end of this period Pandu said to Kunti, "O beautiful one, Indra, the King of heaven, is pleased with you, so invoke him and conceive a son." Kunti then invoked Indra, who came to her and begot Arjuna. As soon as the prince was born, the same celestial voice boomed through the sky: "O Kunti, this child will be as strong as Kartavirya and Sibi [two powerful kings of Vedic times] and as invincible in battle as Indra himself. He will spread your fame everywhere and acquire many divine weapons." Subsequently, Pandu's junior wife Madri bore two sons named Nakula and Sahadeva. These five sons of Pandu (Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva) then came to be known as the Pandavas.

Now, since Pandu had retired from the throne and gone to the forest, Dhrtarastra had temporarily assumed the throne until Pandu's eldest son Yudhishthira came of age. However, long before that time Pandu died as a result of the curse, and Madri gave up her life as well by ascending his funeral pyre. That left the five Pandavas in the care of Queen Kunti.

After Pandu's death, the sages living in the forest brought the five young princes and Kunti to the Kaurava court at Hastinapura (near present-day Delhi). In Hastinapura, the capital city of the kingdom, the five boys were raised in royal style under the guidance of Dhrtarastra and the noble Vidura, Pandu's half brother.

But a smooth transfer of power was not to be. Although Dhrtarastra had at first recognized the primogeniture of Yudhishthira, he later allowed himself to be used by his eldest son, the power-hungry Duryodhana, who wished to ascend the throne in place of Yudhishthira. Driven by uncontrollable jealousy, Duryodhana plotted against the Pandavas, and with the hesitant approval of the weak Dhrtarastra, he inflicted many sufferings upon them. He made several attempts on their lives in Hastinapura, and then he brought them to a provincial palace and tried to assassinate them by having it set on fire. All the while, the five youthful Pandavas were accompanied by their courageous mother Kunti, who suffered Duryodhana's atrocities in the company of her beloved sons.

Miraculously, however, Kunti and the Pandavas repeatedly escaped death, for they were under the loving protection of Lord Krsna, who had incarnated to perform His earthly pastimes. Ultimately Duryodhana, a clever politician, cheated the Pandavas out of their kingdom (and their freedom) in a gambling match. As a result of the match, the Pandavas' wife Draupadi was abused by the Kauravas, and the Pandavas themselves were forced to spend thirteen years in exile in the forest - to the great sorrow of Kunti.

When the thirteen-year exile had ended, the Pandavas returned to Hastinapura to reclaim their kingdom. But Duryodhana bluntly refused to relinquish it. Then, after some unsuccessful attempts to quell the hostilities, Yudhisthira sent Krsna Himself to secure the return of the Pandava kingdom by peaceful means. But even this effort failed - because of Duryodhana's obstinacy - and both sides prepared for battle. To place Yudhisthira on the throne - or to oppose him - great warriors from all corners of the earth assembled, setting the scene for what would prove to be a devastating world war.

Fierce fighting raged for eighteen days on the historic plain of Kuruksetra (near Hastinapura), and in the end all but a handful of the many millions of warriors were dead. Only Lord Krsna, the Pandavas, and a few others survived the massacre. The Kauravas (Duryodhana and his brothers) were devastated. In a desperate gesture of revenge, Asvatthama, one of the surviving Kauravas, mercilessly murdered the five sons of Draupadi while they were sleeping. Queen Kunti thus suffered a final blow - the loss of her grandchildren.

Arrested and dragged to the Pandavas' camp like a bound animal, Asvatthama was let free only by the astounding compassion of Draupadi, the slaughtered boys' mother and Kunti's daughter-in-law, who pleaded for his life. But the shameless Asvatthama made one more attempt to kill the last heir of the Pandavas, their unborn grandson in the womb of Uttara, by hurling the supreme brahmastra weapon. When she saw the missile flying straight at her, Uttara immediately ran to the shelter of Lord Krsna, who was just about to depart for Dvaraka, His majestic capital city. Krsna

protected the Pandavas and their mother Kunti from imminent death by stopping the weapon's uncontrollable heat and radiation with His own Sudarsana disc.

Having delivered the Pandavas from this last calamity, and seeing that all His plans were fulfilled, Lord Krsna was again preparing to leave. For years Duryodhana had tormented Queen Kunti's family, but Krsna had protected them at every turn - and now He was going away. Kunti was overwhelmed, and she prayed to Krsna from the core of her heart.

Kunti was Lord Krsna's aunt (He had incarnated as the son of her brother Vasudeva), yet despite this conventional tie with the Lord, she fully understood His exalted and divine identity. She knew full well that He had descended from His abode in the spiritual world to rid the earth of demoniac military powers and reestablish righteousness. Just before the great war, Krsna had revealed all this to her son Arjuna in words immortalized in the *Bhagavad-gita* (4.7-8):

Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion - at that time I incarnate Myself. In order to deliver the pious and annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium.

Krsna had accomplished His purpose of "annihilating the miscreants" by orchestrating the destruction of the unholy Kauravas. Then He installed Yudhishthira on the throne to establish the Pandava reign, and He consoled the slain warriors' relatives. The scene of the Lord's imminent departure provides the setting for Queen Kunti's exalted prayers.

As Kunti approached the Lord's chariot and began to address Him, her immediate purpose was to persuade Him to remain in Hastinapura and protect the Pandava government from reprisals:

Oh my Lord...are You leaving us today, though we are completely dependent on Your mercy and have no one else to protect us, now when all kings are at enmity with us? (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.8.37)

From this supplication we should not mistakenly conclude that Kunti's prayers were self-serving. Although her sufferings were far greater than those any ordinary person could endure, she does not beg relief. On the contrary, *she prays to suffer even more*, for she reasons that her suffering will increase her devotion to the Lord and bring her ultimate liberation:

My dear Krsna, Your Lordship has protected us from the poisoned cake, from a great fire, from cannibals, from the vicious assembly, from sufferings during our exile in the forest, and from the battle where great generals fought.... I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths. (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.8.24-25)

Kunti's words - the simple and illuminating outpourings of the soul of a great and saintly woman devotee - reveal both the deepest transcendental emotions of the heart and the most profound philosophical and theological penetrations of the intellect. Her words are words of glorification impelled by a divine love steeped in wisdom:

O Lord of Madhu, as the Ganges forever flows to the sea without hindrance, let my attraction be constantly drawn unto you without being diverted to anyone else. (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.8.42)

Kunti's spontaneous glorification of Lord Krsna and her description of the spiritual path are immortalized in the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana* (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*), and they have been recited, chanted, and sung by sages and philosophers for thousands of years.

As they appear in the First Canto of the *Bhagavatam*, Queen Kunti's celebrated prayers consist of only twenty six couplets (verses 18 through 43 of the Eighth Chapter), yet they are considered a philosophical, theological, and literary masterpiece. The present book (Teachings of Queen Kunti) includes those inspired verses and illuminating commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acarya of the Hare Krishna Movement and the most renowned Vedic scholar and spiritual leader of our time. In addition to this commentary (originally written in

1962), *Teachings of Queen Kunti* contains further explanations that Srila Prabhupada gave more recently in an absorbing series of lectures. In those memorable talks, delivered in the spring of 1973 in Los Angeles, he analyzed the verses in significantly greater detail and shed even more light upon them.

Edited by yfaj for my friend Marta.